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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

REPORT

SUBJECT Popular Attitudes: Response of Army
Conscripts to Political Indoctrination,
Attitudes of Youth, Czech-Slovak
Relations

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report on miscellaneous attitudes of
the Czech and Slovak peoples. Topics covered include response of army
conscripts to political indoctrination, attitudes of Czechoslovak yo^{25X1}
and Czech-Slovak relations.

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COUNTRY: Czechoslovakia

6 February 1957

SUBJECT: Miscellaneous Czech and Slovak
Popular Attitudes

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Response of Czechoslovak Army Conscripts to Political Indoctrination

1. Since the better trained and educated young men usually went to officers' schools, the regular conscripts in the Czechoslovak army were usually boys from poorer families who had had limited educations. From the time they entered on duty, the regime made a strenuous effort to gain their loyalty through intensive indoctrination. The young soldier was completely isolated from all outside influence during his army service; he could not escape the pressure for even five minutes. From the time he arose in the morning until he went to sleep at night, he was lectured by the political officer, harangued by activists, and exposed to propaganda issuing from radio speakers installed in the barracks and "recreation" halls, or printed in the Communist newspapers he was required to read.
2. The system of indoctrination was based on seeing that the soldier had no time to think for himself and that he was subjected to constant "political education" throughout the period of training. Passes which would permit a conscript to escape from this barrage were almost impossible to obtain. An occasional furlough was granted as a reward for political aptitude or, if a soldier did something outstanding, he might obtain a pass for leave with his family. Otherwise, he was confined to the barracks area. The very low pay of the private (about 75 crowns per month) further limited his activity, since this was barely enough for his minimum needs at the army canteen. The conscript even had to pay for the writing materials used in training courses.
3. [redacted] the Slovak conscript usually possessed more resilience and resistance to indoctrination than the Czech because of deeper religious and patriotic-nationalist feelings. However, the Regime's practice of training Slovak conscripts away from home in western Bohemia helped break down the resistance of the Slovaks, who were inclined to yield more readily to Communist indoctrination when discouraged and lonesome.

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4. [redacted] the attitude of the conscript as gradually undergoing a change. Hating the army routine at first, he gradually began to accept the officers, the training, and the political indoctrination as a necessary evil to which he became resigned. With each passing month, the repetition of the socialist indoctrination on all sides began to influence his attitudes and thinking in spite of the fact that he might be personally opposed to the Regime because of his religious or family background. Finally, in the case of many conscripts, the indoctrination led to acceptance of Marxist-Leninist principles. 25X1
5. By the end of military service, the pattern of Communist action and thought was so well established that, upon returning to civilian life, many former soldiers were incapable of shaking it off and became at least tacit supporters of the Regime. 25X1
- [redacted] approximately half of the conscripts from Slovakia who completed one term of army service remained loyal to Communism after their return to civilian life. [redacted] did not know how long this new loyalty lasted. In [redacted] army life the conscript learned that there was no hope of achieving anything through resistance, so he accepted everything and complied in order to live. [redacted] by nature, the Slovaks were more volatile than the Czechs, so he could not predict how long such acceptance of Communist doctrines might last. 25X1

Attitudes of Czechoslovak Youth

6. [redacted] 25X1
- Czechoslovak youth was discouraging from the standpoint of those who were opposed to Communism. The youth over eighteen was more resistant to Communist indoctrination, but those below that age usually could not be trusted. [redacted] children, aged seven to twelve, had informed their school teachers about parents listening to western radio broadcasts. He also knew of instances where, in order to avoid chores, the children of peasants told their parents that they had to attend Pioneer meetings. When the fathers insisted that the chores must be done, the fathers were reported to the Czechoslovak Youth Organization which brought pressures to bear on the fathers, criticizing them for being "opposed to proper education of their children". On the whole, the influence of the parents was declining. Among the youngsters, acceptance of the Regime and Communism was spreading because there appeared to be no other alternative. 25X1
7. The younger children were subjected to Communist-directed indoctrination and guidance both at school and out of school through various Pioneer, cultural center, and recreational activities. Whereas the youth above eighteen resented and hated the present Regime and was inclined to look toward an outside force to overcome it, the youngsters below eighteen accepted it because they knew no other system than the present one. Since the children did not concern themselves with economic matters, they were prone to disregard the effect on personal liberties of collectivization and nationalization.

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On the other hand, those above eighteen realized that everything that had been strictly Czechoslovak in the past was pushed into the background, and had been replaced with praise for the USSR and socialism.

8. The working youth was inclined to regard the economic development of the country with pride, but at the same time he realized that the greater the production, the greater the exploitation of his country by the Soviets. However, the consolation remained, that the factories and buildings would continue to exist even after the present Regime ceased to function.
9. In determining the effect of the Communist indoctrination on youth, [] it essential to divide Czechoslovak youth into two general age groups. Those who were born after 1943 were most heavily influenced by the new socialist outlook taught in school, and even accepted the explanations offered by the instructors and educators regarding the discrepancies which existed between theory and reality. On the other hand, those born before 1943 remembered more of the pre-Communist past and consequently were more critical of the Regime. They showed more resistance to Communist teachings, were more inclined to believe what their elders told them and, above all, showed a tendency to try to arrive at their own opinions. In general, [] the long term effect of Communist indoctrination on youth would be great on both groups, despite the different degrees to which they had absorbed it.
10. In spite of their greater absorption of the Regime indoctrination, the children did not enjoy its application. This forced feeding of propaganda took much of the enjoyment out of activities which otherwise might have been fun, or at least interesting. As a result, most of the youth disliked scouting, movies, literature, and the training to which they were subjected. Particularly in schools above the elementary level, the discipline was strict; there was little or no freedom of choice and the restrictive "principles of socialist labor" were applied. Lectures had to be attended, reports prepared, and certain political courses required, irrespective of whether or not they contributed to a greater knowledge of the major subjects studied. This created much student dissatisfaction. Working youth was also dissatisfied, partly because of the lack of opportunity for expanding technical qualifications for better positions.

Czech-Slovak Relationships

11. Officially the Czechs and Slovaks together form the Czechoslovak state, but [] the traditional antagonism of each group toward the other continues, and is even encouraged by the Communist Regime in its own interest of preventing effective opposition. As an example of the Regime's efforts to cause dissension, [] the practice of sending Slovak and Moravian conscripts to Bohemia, where they were regarded and treated by the Czechs as country yokels capable of only menial tasks. On the other hand, the Czech soldiers in Slovakia were looked upon with suspicion as Communist agents. [] the story of General Milan Stefanik's death was still circulating in Slovakia, with emphasis placed on the allegation that "the Jews paid the Czechs to kill Stefanik."

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12. Slovak complaints of discriminatory treatment included allegations that the Slovaks had always been given the poorest school teachers and that all official positions, even on the lowest levels, had been occupied by Czechs. [redacted] that even today in the average Slovak village, the school teacher and the village official who acted as notary public and tax collector were Czechs. Even the manager of the nationalized retail store and the tavern keeper were usually not Slovaks, but Jews. 25X1
13. [redacted] Invariably they regarded the Slovak worker as inferior to the Czech worker and capable of doing only the less complicated tasks. This was usually reflected in the assignment of Slovaks to manual work. [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] in the border area of Rokytnice v Orlických Horách, it was customary for Poles to alternate patrols each month with their Czech counterparts. If a stray cow or sheep crossed the border at any time, inquiries made for the record regarding the lost animal would be disregarded by mutual agreement. This behavior contrasted with practice in Polish-Slovak border areas where some Slovaks were retained as border patrolmen. Here not only were lost or stray animals returned to their owners, but meadows were shared and the Slovak guards obtained free milk from the peasants on the Polish side of the border. The Slovak guards were also able to take advantage of their twenty kilometer border passes by attending dances and going shopping in Poland. (This understanding between the Poles and Slovaks also fostered the smuggling of home brew, meat, and clothing.) 25X1
14. In the regular army there was a tendency for the Slovak soldiers to stay apart as a group. The Moravians also showed a reluctance to mingle with their Czech counterparts and tended to fraternize with the Slovaks with whom they seemed to have much in common. Even though the attitude of the conscripts from Bohemia toward the Slovak and Moravian conscripts was cool and reserved, that of his civilian counterpart was more friendly.
15. Within Slovakia, nearly all age and occupation groups harbored a deep resentment toward the Czechs in the belief that the Czechs were instrumental in foisting Communism upon Slovakia. [redacted] every Slovak believed that the post-World War II density of Communists was only about 14 to 18 percent in Slovakia as compared to 60 percent in the rest of the country, and that in spite of this predominance of democratic elements in Slovakia, the Czechs in 1948 overcame all resistance of the Slovaks and set up the present Communist Regime. [redacted] there was a predominant faith among the Slovaks that because an independent Slovakia once existed, an independent Slovak sovereign state would again exist. The older generation felt that it might not live to see the day, but that its children most certainly would. 25X1
16. It was the desire of most Slovaks to have their affairs be settled in Bratislava and not in Prague. In their efforts to undermine Slovak nationalism, the Communists were trying to "Czechize" Slovakia in spite of the alleged granting of greater

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autonomy. [] these efforts would be in vain, 25X1
in spite of the fact that some of the new generation was
being influenced by Communist teachings. He had confidence
in the ability of all mature Slovaks to continue their
passive resistance to Communism until the day when they would
be able to work freely for an independent Slovak state. []
[] those in their twenties represented the last generation 25X1
which remembered clearly the pre-Munich Czechoslovakia and
that it would be this group which would try hardest to counter 25X1
the effect of Communist indoctrination on the younger generation
of Slovak youth.

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